SUZUKI GS750

Steve Bergman Tells You How To Buy An Alleged Classic

Suzuki introduced the GS750 in the late Seventies. It shared its looks and stable with the GS550 – which was also chain final drive, the GS850 which was shaft drive and the GS1000 which was either!

The GS750 engine configuration was typical Seventies Japanese – across-the-frame four cylinder with two valves per cylinder. While the 68bhp produced by the GS750 engine looks pathetic by today's standards you have to remember the greater power spread – those of you who have ridden older bikes will know what I mean. Nice and wide with the generator on the end of the crankshaft. The engine is very strong and even neglected ones, or those with a high mileage can – if they're not still good – easily be resurrected. A rattly engine with poor tickover may only mean that the carburetors are out of balance or the cam chain and perhaps the tensioner need attention. You will find that the tensioners can get a bit sticky and need a good flush out and new grease. Camchains are skinny thin things that don't take to kindly to the previously mentioned sticky tensioner or abuse but are, at least, quick and cheap to replace.

As far as the rest of the engine is concerned, buckets and shims adjust the valve clearances. However, the shims are above the bucket and are easy to get in and out. Having said that, you are likely to come across shims with no sizes on them due to a previous owner putting them in with the writing upwards! You will need a micrometer to measure the thickness. The upside of all that shim stuff is that at least the shims hardly ever need changing as the clearances seem to remain settled once the engine is bedded down.

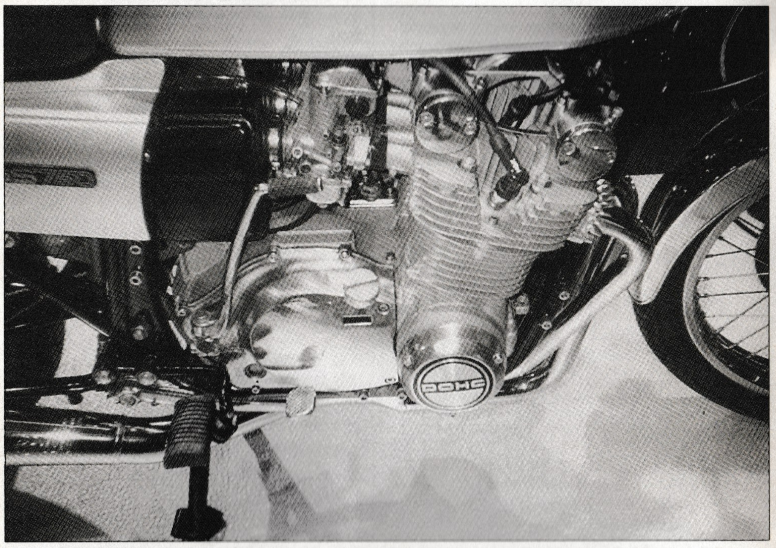
Ignition timing is by good old-fashioned points, the gap of which will need frequent checking as any change also affects the ignition timing. A useful modification would be to fit aftermarket electronics. While on the subject of modifications, an essential change is to the exhaust system, especially if the bike is fitted with an aftermarket system that requires removal to access the oil filter housing at the front of the engine. If you have bolts holding the header pipes to the cylinder head change them for a good quality stainless steel stud. Then fix the headers in place using dome headed nuts which will stop the threads from filling with road muck and will save a lot of headaches as you strip threads!

Camchains are skinny thin things that don't take to kindly to the previously mentioned sticky tensioner or abuse but are, at least, quick and cheap to replace. Usually.

The frame and suspension of the GS750 is typical of its time. Compared to more modern machinery the frame seems a bit sparse-looking, which is a surprise when you find the bike weighs a good 500lbs. And the front forks look so skinny it's scary! Playing with the fork oil to adjust the damping is usually recommended. Try 50% fork oil mixed with

C

50% engine oil as a start. A fork brace will help stop the forks from twisting but in the end the flex in the forward or rearward direction – yes they do, just look down under heavy braking – can only be cured by fitting the front end from another bike. A good choice would be from the GS650GT or Katana as the stanchions are thicker and stiffer but they retain the same style and size of wheel. The rear suspension units will be knackered if they are standard – they were not that good new. Hagon aftermarket rear shocks will do the trick and if you really want



you can fit a flash aftermarket swing arm at the rear, all nice and rigid and polished. Believe me it will make a difference.

The 19 inch front and 18 inch rear wheels will severely limit tyre choice. However there are some good all-round tyres which work OK on the GS range of Suzukis. Bridgestone or Avon seem to suit the Suzuki best, with Pirelli second. Metzeler or Continentals should be avoided. Expect around 7000 miles from your tyres – which is pretty goods these days. With these early Japanese bikes you do need to experiment to get the best.

During the Seventies the Japanese decided we couldn't go around with rusty looking disc brakes on bikes. After all they make the bike look so scruffy! Not as much as a good front end impact though. Unfortunately, the method the Japanese chose to prevent rusting was the use of stainless steel for the discs. This was bad, as stainless has a very poor friction compared to cast iron. Especially in the rain. However, all this did lead to a rash of aftermarket brake pads, most of which, were better than the standard ones when it came to wet weather stopping. If you find wet weather braking scares your pants off then abrasive aftermarket pads will most certainly help.

And for your own sake if the bike has still the standard hoses change them for braided ones. Come on, you don't really think thirty year old hoses are OK do you?

Are you put off from buying a GS750 yet? I hope not. All the above faults are really a hindsight thing, which comes about through comparing the GS750 with modern stuff. And the old GS can be picked up for less than a grand, sorted out for a couple of hundred, be really useful as an all-rounder that is less likely to be knicked and if you take a few precautions will not depreciate.

During the Seventies the Japanese decided we couldn't go around with rusty disc brakes on bikes. After all they make the bike look so scruffy! Not as scruffy as a good front end impact though!

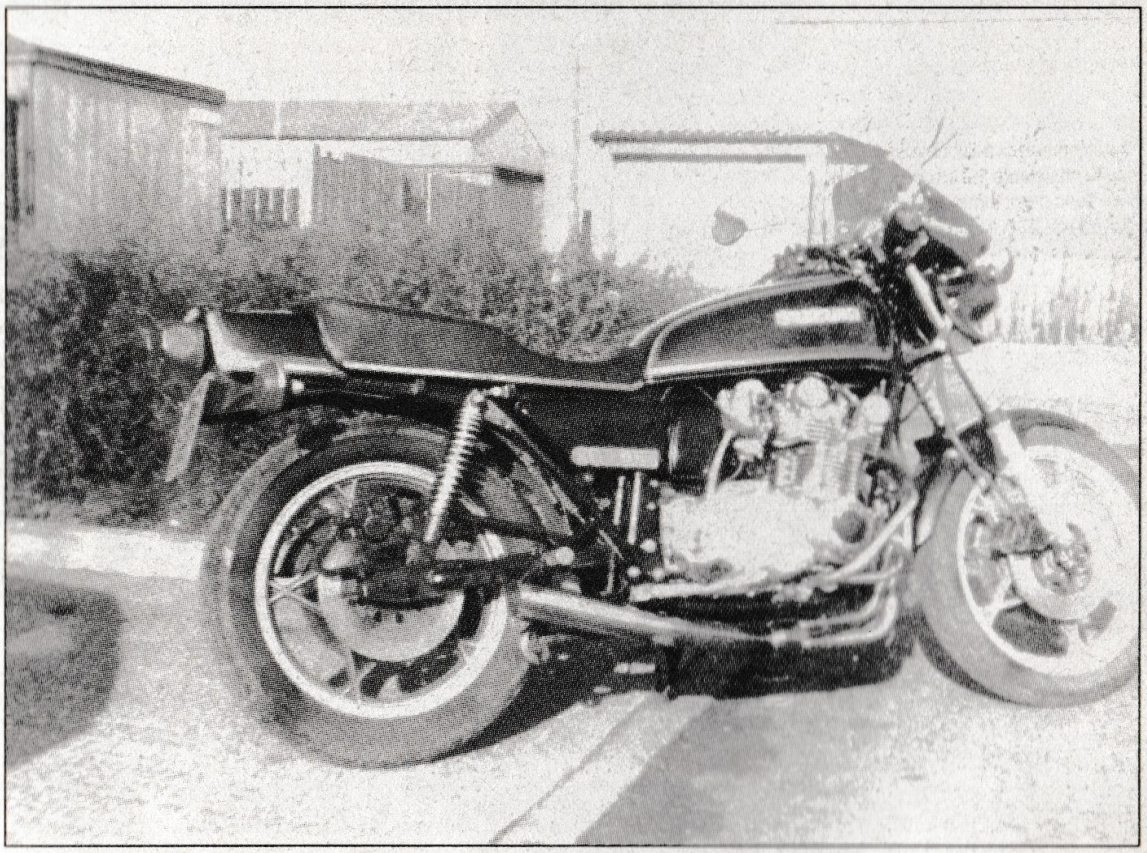
In use, within its limitations, you will find the GS750 a comfortable bike whether solo or two-up. The seat is plenty big enough – in fact it's enormous when compared to some modern stuff. The more or less standard design allows fitments of racks and panniers, off the shelf tank bags and fairings. The older, two valve, engine design means a good spread of power with no need to rev the engine hard.

All right, it would look like an old git's bike with all that stuff on it but the GS750 was one of the favourite Japanese bikes for chopping or modding and that still holds good. The long wheelbase and easily hacked about frame does leave a lot of room for scope if you just want a town runner that is different.

CHECK OUT THE VINTAGE JAPANESE MC AT WWW.VJMC.COM

TELL 'EM UMG SENT YA!

C

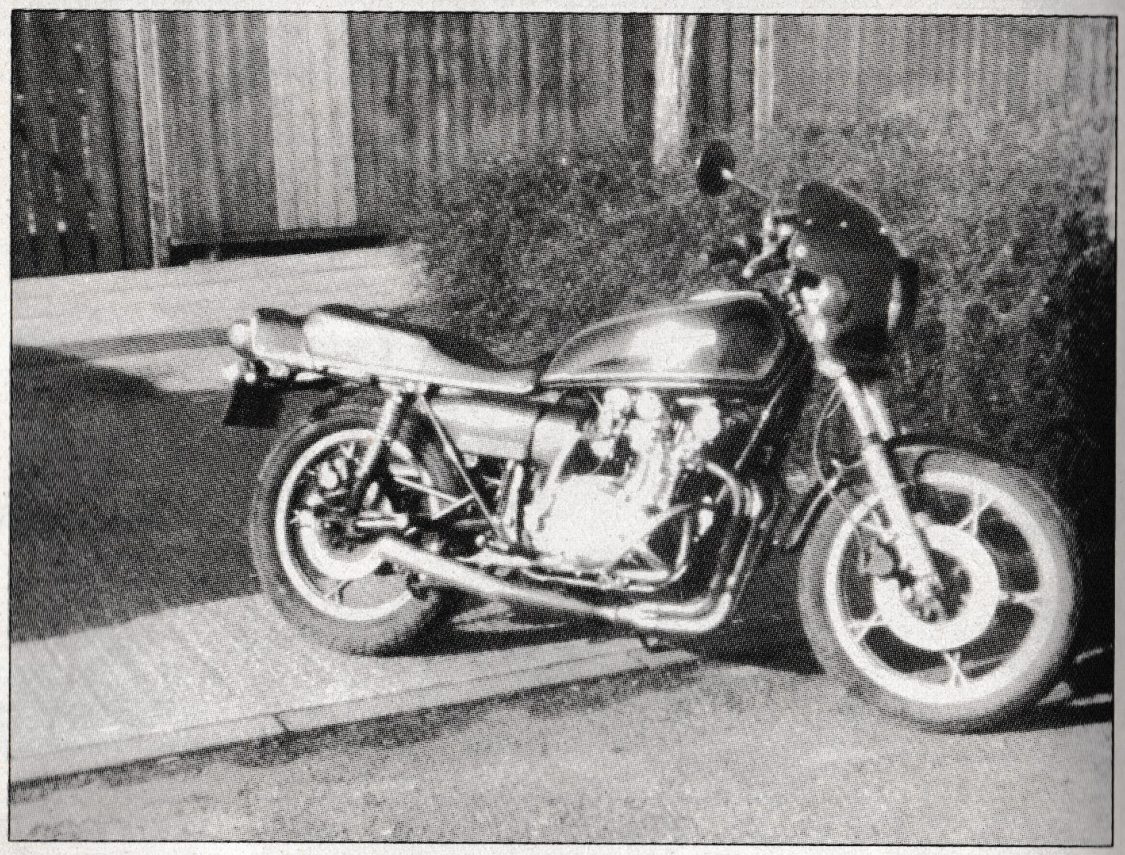


UJM

UNIVERSAL JAPANESE ACROSS THE frame four is the phrase best used to describe the GS750 Suzuki. There is nothing surprising about the GS750 and nothing controversial. Which makes it a very practical bike. It also means it is very versatile, as many custom bike builders have found. You don't have to look far to see a GS750 chop for sale although the most interesting use I have seen for a GS750 engine was to lever it into a GS550 Katana frame!

You could start a Suzuki Shim Swap Shop for your town!

The four cylinder twin camshaft with two valves per cylinder engine is just about bulletproof. There is no good reason other than really serious abuse why the engine should not easily go round the clock. And the abused ones will probably easily make 50,000 before a rebuild gives them a new lease of life. Valve clearances are adjusted by changing shims which are conveniently placed above the buckets and even more conveniently seem never to need doing. Seek out all the other GS Suzuki owners in your town. GS1000, GS850, GS650 and GS750 – they all use the same shims. You could start a Suzuki Shim Swap Shop for your town! Just make sure you put them in the right way round otherwise you will not be able to read the thickness. There is a special lever thing which costs next to nothing to depress the bucket enabling you to get the shim out using your wife's eyebrow tweez-



ers – or alternatively you can slide a large screwdriver in the gap and lever the bucket down.

The camshaft is driven by a single row chain tensioned by a spring loaded and usually reliable tensioner behind the cylinders and under the carbs. The tensioner may need the occasional bit of a clean-up and grease on high mileage bikes. And, if the chain rattles despite a nicely cleaned and greased tensioner it probably needs replacing. Out of balance carbs will make the camchain rattle too. Expect to replace the chain around 35,000 miles relatively cheaply.

Early carbs were slide type with a really nice and meaty intake roar. The price you paid was 35 to 40mpg. That may sound reasonable to those of you who are used to modern stuff but coupled to a petrol tank which only holds about 3 gallons of petrol, even though it looks big, means you are filling up every 100 miles or so which is rubbish if you're rolling along the road to Scotland or somewhere. It's the one poor aspect of the bike that you can't easily do something about. Which is a shame as it is very capable of going round the world and taking you and your pillion in comfort (I have seen a GS1000 tank fitted to one which is very similar in appearance and certainly holds much more).

Carb balance is easy enough if you or one of your mates in the Local Town Suzuki Shim Swap Club has some vacuum gauges. That is, it's easy as long as you don't mind burning your fingers trying to get the vacuum gauge hose adaptors to screw into the intake rubbers. Those of you who are not members of the swap club will get away with four ice lolly sticks. These are used to place under the intake slides of the carbs once you have removed the intake rubbers and opened the throttle a bit. The important bit here is to make sure all the sticks are poked in the carbs the same amount. As you open and close the throttle all the sticks will waggle up and down and should stay in line if viewed from the side. Adjust as appropriate. Performance is helped if you remember to take the ice lolly sticks out before putting the intake rubbers back on. New sticks should be used each time and I would recommend only very high

quality sticks as used, for example, in Magnums.

The air cleaner is wash and go. Contact breakers sit under a small cover on the clutch side and are easy to adjust if you really have nothing better to do. Essential oil changes are quick and easy with the filter being changed every other oil change just as easily, unless you have fitted the type of four-into-one exhaust which you find goes across the oil filter! Easy to check and as it's not cheap to replace exhausts you should knock the price down when buying. If that sounds drastic then consider further. The standard bike has bolts to hold the exhaust downpipes to the engine and not studs. So every other oil change those steel bolts have been unwound from the aluminium head. Once the bike is yours replace the bolts with stainless steel studs. Otherwise the engine seems largely unaffected by exhaust choice – which probably has a lot to do with the amounts of fuel which go down them via the carbs.

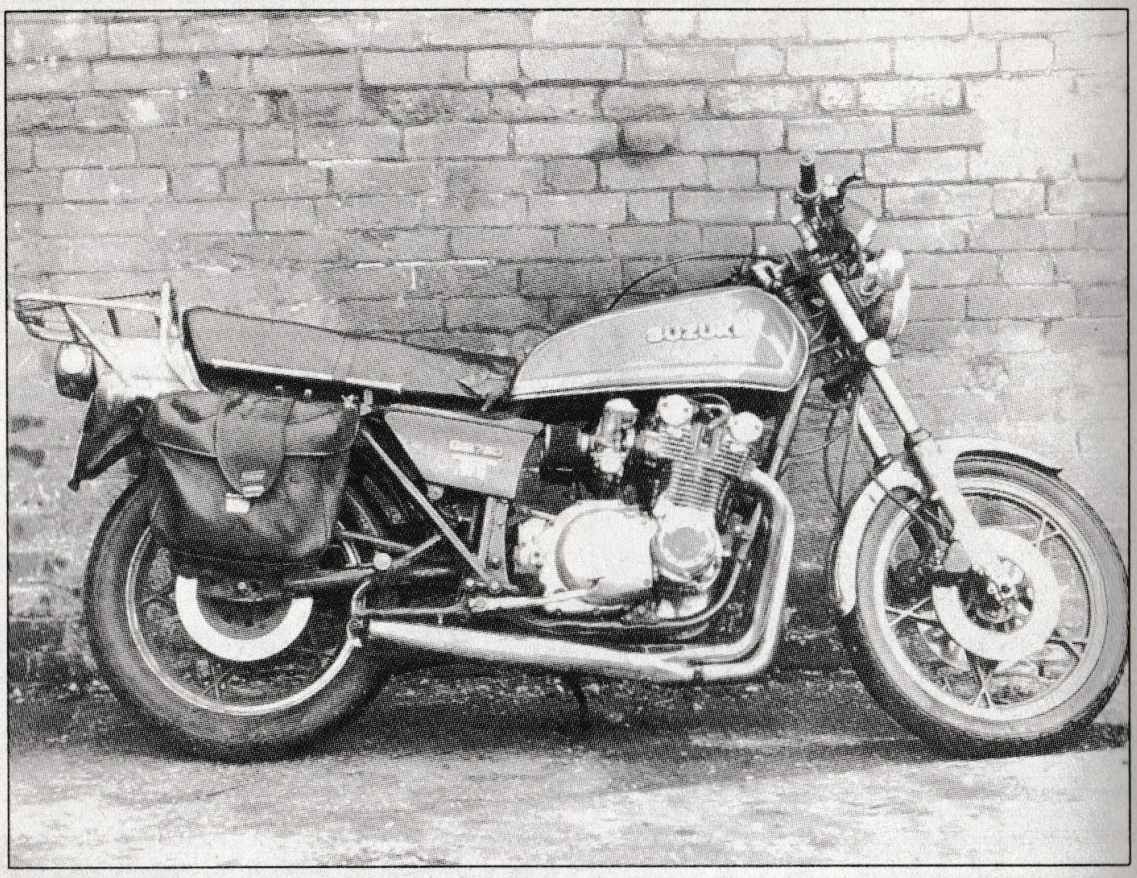
If the bike is about to reach the 30,000 mile mark then you should budget for wheel bearings, steering bearings and swinging arm bearings. All are readily available and dead cheap from bearing factors. If you have money to burn then get the Suzuki ones. All are easy to fit but it is a little scary when you take the swinging arm apart and all these rusty bearing bits fall out! New ones should be well packed with a waterproof grease. Same goes for steering bearings. High temperature grease will stay in the wheel bearings longer if you get the right type of bearing with seals on.

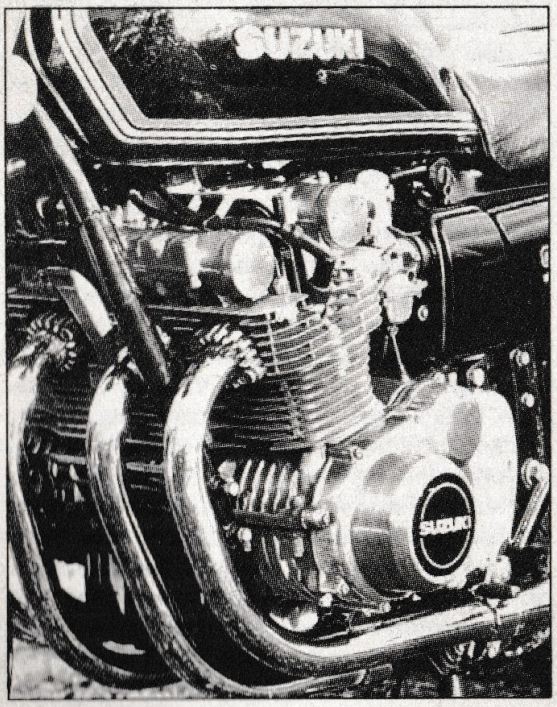
Carb balance is easy enough if you or one of your mates in the Local Town Suzuki Shim Swap Club has some vacuum gauges...

With a 19 inch wheel at the front and a 18 inch wheel at the back the Suzuki GS750 is going to be limited on tyre choice especially given that the rims are quite narrow. Dunlop Arrowmax or Avon Roadrunners for budget but a little more cash gets a lot more grip with Avon Supervenoms. You will also find considerable improvement in wet weather grip if you fit Supervenoms. Tyre life does depend on type of use but 7000 miles from the front and 6000 miles from the back ought to be possible, although you may experience squaring off at the back or shoulder wear at the front in certain circumstances. If you are doing lots of straight line stuff try the Bridgestone BT35 at the back with its dual compound soft side and hard middle. The BT35 works fine with a Supervenom front or another Bridgestone but I wouldn't recommend its use with an Arrowmax or Roadrunner as you will have more grip at the back than the front. Which might prove to be a little interesting!

Standard Japanese discs of the era can be made to work in the wet with decent pads. Decent pads and Supervenoms will have the front forks deflecting backwards under heavy braking. The forks seemed great when the bike was first unleashed on the public but compared to modern bikes they seem incredibly skinny. The standard swinging arm and shocks at the back don't fare much better. If the bike is standard and you want it to

READERS' RIDES





remain so (a classic!) then braking hard before the corner and powering out without wrestling with the bars as they gyrate around will see you going along at a very reasonable pace. The secret with these early Japanese bikes is not to fight with them when they go all bendy toy. If you have confidence in your tyres then leaning a bit more and gently feeding in the power works and is hugely entertaining for your mates.

Of course, the more sensible among you will have fitted a fork brace, shiny aftermarket aluminium swinging arm and decent shocks at the back. Makes a wonderful difference to the handling and looks really cool.

Overall the Suzuki GS750 is a nice bike to own, maintain and ride. They can be made to go exceedingly well Mr Kipling, and be tarted up to look neat outside the pub or impress the girlies. I was so impressed I bought one.

Steve Bergman / UBG